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Website: www.ins.org.il

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The Nea(polis?) *Folles* of Heraclius

David Woods
University College Cork
d.woods@ucc.ie

Abstract
This paper reviews the different logical possibilities in the case of a small group of copper coins struck under the emperor Heraclius that have been traditionally attributed to a town named Neapolis. The difficulty in identifying the location of this Neapolis, usually identified as either Nablus in Palestine or Limassol in Cyprus, is highlighted, as is the doubt even as to whether the group is really attributable to any town of this name.

A small group of copper coins of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610–641 CE) has been attributed to a mint at Neapolis, commonly identified with the Neapolis (modern Nablus) in the Byzantine province of *Palaestina Prima*, but sometimes identified instead with the Neapolis (modern Limassol) on the southern coast of Cyprus.[1] The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the weakness of the arguments for the attribution of these coins to either Neapolis, and to explore the alternative possibilities. This group consists of four different types, three types of *follis* and one type of half *follis*.[2] All of the *folles* imitate what Grierson classifies as the Class 5 *follis* of Constantinople (*DOC* 2/1:228; Fig. 1). Hence they depict two standing figures on the obverse, the figure to the left in military dress holding a long cross and the figure to the right in civilian dress holding a *globus cruciger*, with a small cross in the field between the heads of the two figures. The only difference between the obverse of these coins and that of a standard Class 5 *follis* is that they all include a letter K beneath the small cross on the obverse. On the reverse, they depict a large numeral M with the Latin legend ANNO (or ANN) descending down the left side, a Roman numeral representing the regnal year descending down the right side, an apparent *officina* number beneath the central arch of the M, and a mintmark in the exergue. They also depict a Heraclian monogram with crossbar above the denomination M. Similarly, the half *follis* resembles a standard Class 5 half *follis*.

1 In favor of the identification of Neapolis with Nablus, see Hahn 1981:110; Foss 2008:15. In favor of its identification with Limassol, see Donald 1986; Bijovsky 2012:383. Metcalf 2009:164 also seems to favor Nablus, describing it as "the more obvious candidate", and stating that "it is unlikely that the mint is Cypriot". No one seems to have seriously considered any possibility outside of Nablus or Limassol.

2 None is included in *DOC*, while *MIB* only includes two of the *folles*. Donald 1986 first published the half *follis*, while Donald 1987 published the third type of *follis*.

Fig. 1. *Follis* of Heraclius from Constantinople dated regnal year 20 (11.22 g, 30 mm, *MIB* 3 164b; CNG Auction 87, May 18, 2011, Lot 1220)

One should perhaps comment first on the significance of the K beneath the cross on the obverse of all of the coins within this group, including the half *follis*.[3] The obverse of the Class 5 *follis* often depicts the monogram of Heraclius in the field to the left of the figure in military dress and the letter K for Κωνσταντῖνος in reference to his son Heraclius Constantine in the field to the right of the figure in civilian dress, or sometimes just the letter K to the right of the figure in civilian dress (as above). Alternatively, it depicts no letters or monograms at all in the field, just a plain cross between the heads of these figures. The fact that the coins under discussion only ever depict a K, and that this is placed immediately beneath the small cross between the heads of the two figures, could seem to suggest a new emphasis on Heraclius Constantine rather than his father. However, another feature of the Class 5 *follis* was the variety of symbols depicted above the denomination M on the reverse. Of particular relevance here is the fact that the Heraclian monogram only began to be depicted there from regnal year 25 (October 5, 634–October 4, 635) onward, although it was not the only symbol depicted there even then.[4] It is probable, therefore, that the engraver responsible for the alleged Neapolis group of coins, which probably began to be struck in regnal year 25 also, as will be discussed below, had access to a Constantinopolitan *follis* with a Heraclian monogram over the denomination M. Consequently, he decided to include the K on the obverse, but move it from its traditional position to the right of the figure in civilian dress to the top of the obverse instead, in imitation of the position of the Heraclian monogram on the reverse. In this way, by depicting the Heraclian monogram at the top of the

3 In the case of the half *follis* published by Donald 1986, the K beneath the cross on the obverse is retrograde, which raises the question of whether this is best treated as an imitative coin rather than a genuine product of the Nea(polis?) mint.

4 During the period regnal years 20–25 (inclusive), there were two separate issues of *follis* each year at Constantinople, distinguishable by the different symbols above the M. In year 25, one issue depicted the Heraclian monogram above the M, the other the letter *theta*. The pattern of issues is best revealed by the relevant chart at the end of *MIB*.

reverse and the K at the top of the obverse, he achieved a rather different balance than that represented by the common depiction of these symbols together on the obverse of the traditional Class 5 *follis*, but a balance nevertheless.

Fig. 2. *Follis* of Heraclius attributed to Neapolis, N/CON type (5.97 g, 24.6 mm, *MIB* 3: No. X23; Pavlos S. Pavlou on VCoins, June 10, 2016; SKU IS434). Courtesy of Pavlos S. Pavlou

Fig. 3. *Follis* of Heraclius attributed to Neapolis, Є/CON type (4.2 g). See Mansfield 2016, No. 18.211. Courtesy of S. Mansfield

Fig. 4. *Follis* of Heraclius attributed to Neapolis, A/NЄA type (4.97 g, 25 mm, *MIB* 3: No. X24; Pavlos S. Pavlou on VCoins, May 30, 2016; SKU IS432). Courtesy of Pavlos S. Pavlou

The three types of *follis* within the alleged Neapolis group can be distinguished from one another by differences in their apparent *officina* numbers and mintmarks. One type depicts the letter N where the *officina* number would normally appear, and displays the mintmark CON below as on the normal product of the mint at Constantinople (*MIB* 3:110, No. X23 [Pl. 12]; Fig. 2). If this N were a Greek letter used as a numeral, as one would normally expect, it would have denoted the fiftieth workshop within the mint, but this is clearly impossible. Instead, it has usually been assumed to be the first letter of the mintmark NЄA as appears on another

type within this group. A second type depicts the letter Є as the *officina* number, with the mintmark CON below (not in *MIB*; Fig. 3). It is the fact that this reverse is matched with the standard obverse for this group with the extra letter K beneath the cross between the heads of the standing figures that allows it to be identified as a member of this group. Finally, the third type depicts the letter A as the *officina* number, with the legend NЄA where the mintmark would normally appear (*MIB* 3:110, No. X24 [Pl. 12]; Fig. 4). These coins are all relatively scarce, although a quick survey of the relevant sales catalogues, suggests that the N/CON and A/NЄA types survive in about equal numbers, but that the Є/CON type is by far the rarest.[5]

Donald (1987) interpreted the letter Є of the second type just noted as the numeral five, but argued that "five officina cannot have been necessary at a small mint". He then assumed that the use of this *officina* number can best be explained as a carryover from a Constantinopolitan *follis* of *officina* Є that had served as the original model for this group. As a result, he concluded that 'the Є/CON coins are the earliest issued from Neapolis, followed by those with N/CON, and thirdly those with A/NЄA'. The idea that a new temporary mint better expressed its specific identity as it continued in production over time certainly has a certain logical appeal. However, there is an alternative possibility also. Donald failed to notice that the three seeming *officina* numbers actually spell NЄA when taken together, the mintmark on one of their number.

This is hardly a coincidence. It seems, therefore, that the engraver responsible for the reverse dies engaged in an elaborate wordplay upon the name of the location where this mint was situated (if this is what NЄA refers to) and began using the fictitious *officina* numbers to spell it out in abbreviation before he finally replaced the fictitious mintmark CON with the same abbreviation. In that case, the N/CON type must have been first, the Є/CON type second, and the A/NЄA type last. There is a precedent for this sort of wordplay, although only from a much earlier period. Under the emperor Probus (276–282), the mints at Rome and Ticinum struck several series of *antoniniani* including some letter in the reverse field as part of the mintmark. However, when combined, these letters formed either the word AEQVITI or EQVITI in reference either to the cavalry (*eques*) or to the nickname of Probus, Equitius (Pink 1949:59, 66–67). Similarly, under Diocletian (284–305) and his colleague Maximian (285–305), the mint at Siscia included several letters or pairs of letters in the mintmarks of some of its *antoniniani* which, when combined, read IOBI 'of Iovius' in the case of coins struck in the name of Diocletian and HPKOVΛI 'of Herculius' in the case of coins struck in the name of Maximian (Von Kolb 1872).

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5 See e.g., Stephen Album, Auction 10, April 22, 2011, Lots 52–53; Auction 19, May 15, 2015, Lots 165–170; Auction 20, September 18, 2014, Lots 133–136. Neither acsearch.info or coinarchives.com list any examples of an Є/CON type *follis*.

As to the date of these coins, the fact that they imitate the Class 5 *follis* of Constantinople first struck in regnal year 20 (October 5, 629–October 4, 630) proves that they cannot have been struck before October 629. One example of the N/CON type has been discovered with the third and last countermark used on the coinage in Sicily depicting the twin busts of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine (Donald 1986: Fig. 3), so the coins were certainly in circulation before the death of Heraclius. Perhaps more importantly, at least two examples of the A/NЄA type have been discovered bearing countermarks unique to coins circulating in or about *Palaestina Prima*, where these countermarks have not been discovered on any *folles* later than regnal year 26 (October 5, 635–October 4, 636).[6]

It is clear, therefore, that the wider NЄA group of coins must have been in circulation by regnal year 26. Finally, all three types within this wider group have been discovered bearing the date regnal year 25, and an example of the A/NЄA type with regnal year 26 has also been published (De Roever 1991). In conjunction with the other evidence for the dating of these coins as already noted, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that these are real dates, and that the production of these coins should be dated accordingly across regnal years 25 and 26 (October 5, 634–October 4, 636).

One may turn next to the significance of the term NЄA whether occurring in the exergue of one type or as spelled by the apparent *officina* numerals of all three types when read together. This is not a Latin term, or part thereof. It is only identifiable as a Greek term, or part thereof. On the one hand, it could be taken as a term complete in itself, as a form of the adjective νέος 'new', whether the nominative singular of the feminine form or the nominative or accusative plural of the neuter form. On the other hand, it could be taken as the abbreviation of some longer term, including a name. Consequently, several different possibilities suggest themselves.

One possibility is that this term was used in the feminine form in reference to the workshop (perhaps Latin *fabrica* transliterated as φάβριξ) or mint (perhaps Latin *moneta* transliterated as μονήτης), so that these coins proclaimed themselves as the product of a 'new' workshop or mint. In support of this, one notes that what was arguably the earliest type within this group had depicted the initial N of the term NЄA where one would normally expect to find the *officina* number. Hence one could argue that this term was not originally intended as a mintmark in the normal sense, that is, as the name of a specific town or region.

Against this, however, one notes that it was standard practice for all copper coins to bear a mintmark clearly specifying their center of production, in marked

6 See Schulze, Schulze and Leimenstoll 2006:11, Cat. No. 126 (both a Type 1 countermark and a Type 2 countermark) and p. 12, Cat. No. 172 (Type 2 countermark). The former specimen, belonging to the collection of A. Pitsillides, was published with a photograph of the reverse by Economides 2003:204. The latter was part of the collection of Henri Pottier, now in the Cabinet des Médailles du Bruxelles.

contrast to the practice in the case of precious-metal coins, most of which can only be attributed on the basis of stylistic criteria. In particular, the fact should be noted that the temporary mints located at Seleucia Isauriae and Isaura Palaia during the periods 615–618 and 617–618 respectively had marked their *folles* accordingly (*MIB* 3:107–108 and 230, Nos. 192–194 and 196–197 respectively). Similarly, the temporary mint located on Cyprus from 626 to 629 had also marked its *folles* accordingly (*MIB* 3:110–111 and 252, No. 198).

However, the evidence for the large-scale production during the second half of the sixth century of copper coins of unusual but uniform style, in imitation of the product of the regular mints, has led to the conclusion that a number of temporary mints accompanied various expeditionary forces during this period. Hahn coined the phrase *moneta militaris imitativa* to describe such coinage.[7] It is obvious, therefore, that temporary mints did not always reveal their locations as explicitly and clearly as did the Heraclian mints at Seleucia Isaura, Isaura, and Cyprus. Yet even during the reign of Heraclius there was an exception to this policy of transparency for the copper coinage. The temporary mint operating at Jerusalem in 614 struck two types of *follis* in quick succession, the first displaying the name of the city in abbreviation in the exergue (IЄPOCO) (*MIB* 3:110, No. X27 [Pl. 14]), the second displaying the slogan XCNIKA (Χριστός νικᾶ ‘Christ conquers!’) there instead with no other indication as to the location of the mint (*MIB* 3:110, No. X28 [Pl. 14]; Fig. 5).[8] It remains possible, therefore, that the NЄA group of coins omitted a mintmark, just like the second type struck at Jerusalem in 614.

Fig. 5. *Follis* of Heraclius from Jerusalem (14.59 g, 32 mm, *MIB* 3: No. X28; CNG Auction 102, May 18, 2016, Lot 1150)

A second possibility is that NЄA may abbreviate some political slogan or prayer. Perhaps one of the most enduring and common themes of Roman and Byzantine coinage was that of victory. As just noted, the second type of *follis* struck at Jerusalem in 614 declared ‘Christ conquers!’ in its exergue. This theme was

7 *MIBEC*:33. See e.g., Mansfield 2014 for the suggestion that such a mint accompanied Justin II’s campaign against the Lombards in the 570s.

8 The order of striking is determined by a growing flaw in an obverse die. See Bendall 2003:313.

continued on the *folles* of Constans II from 641 to 657 when they bore the obverse legend ЄN TδTO NIKA 'Conquer in this sign!' (*MIB* 3:136–138 and 247–250, Nos. 162–165, 167–168, 170–173). The verb used in each case is νικάω 'I conquer', directly related to the noun νίκη 'victory'. It is possible, therefore, that NЄA may abbreviate some slogan declaring νέα νίκη 'A new victory!', where the old victory was understood to be that won over Persia in the long war ending finally in 629, and the new victory was that which the Byzantines hoped to win in the new war that had begun with the first Muslim Arab attacks upon the empire in 632.

In support of this interpretation, one notes that the NЄA group of coins were struck at a point (in *c*. 635) when the Byzantines must have realized that the Muslim Arabs were a serious threat, but not quite how serious they were yet. Had the Byzantines truly understood the reality of the situation then, any call for victory would have seemed premature. Against this, it could be argued that one might have expected the abbreviation of any slogan declaring an expected victory to have preferred to emphasize the term νίκη 'victory' rather than νέα 'new'. However, in Greek the number and gender of the term NЄA render it far less ambiguous, even when used alone, than its simple English translation might initially suggest.

Alternatively, the term NЄA may anticipate to some extent the use of the abbreviated term ANANЄOϚ('renewal') on the reverse of the *folles* declaring ЄN TδTO NIKA on the obverse, since both legends seem to imply that the state is new or renewed in some way.

A third possibility, related to the second, is that, for whatever reason, the NЄA group of coins emphasizes the status of Heraclius Constantine as a New Constantine. It was a common form of praise to acclaim an emperor as a New Constantine, and many emperors had been so acclaimed over the years, even when they were not actually called Constantine (Berger 2008:10–12). In the case of Heraclius Constantine, though, he was called Constantine, and, for example, the *Chronicon Paschale*, composed in *c*. 630, specifically refers to him as Heraclius New Constantine (Ἡράκλειος νέος Κωνσταντῖνος) in its formal dating formula for every year after his crowning as Augustus in 613 until the surviving text breaks off in 628. This is of particular interest when it comes to reading the reverse of the N/CON type. In descending order, one reads the monogram in abbreviation of the name Heraclius, the letter N potentially abbreviating *Novus* (or νέος) and CON potentially abbreviating the name *Constantinus*. Hence the different elements may have been carefully arranged in order to play on the name of Heraclius New Constantine. If that is the case, then the term NЄA may also have been intended as some form of reference to Constantine's status as a New Constantine, that he represented a 'new (rule/kingship)', or something to this effect, where this last term was implied by the gender of the term NЄA. This interpretation requires these coins to have been produced by adherents of Heraclius Constantine. There were growing dynastic tensions during the 630s, as revealed by the attempted coup of

Athalaric against his father usually dated to 637 (Kaegi 2003:260–262), and it may be that the production of these coins was connected to these tensions.

Finally, a fourth possibility is that NЄA abbreviates a real name, the name of a city or region in the conventional manner of a Byzantine mintmark. The obvious suggestion is that it abbreviates the name Neapolis (Νεάπολις), literally meaning 'New City'. The problem, however, is that this was a relatively common urban name in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Perhaps the most famous Neapolis in both the ancient and modern eras is the modern Naples in Campania in Italy. It struck a number of different half *folles*, identifiable by their use of the mintmark NЄ, during *c*. 663–695 (Constans II, *MIB* 3:145–146 and 253, No. 216; Constantine IV, pp. 162 and 260, No. 113; Justinian II, pp. 176 and 266, Nos. 75–76), but no other copper denomination and nothing before this period. This renders it highly unlikely that Naples struck the NЄA group of coins, even before one begins to consider what little evidence there is for the circulation of these coins. Here one should note that the fact that a N/CON type has been discovered with the third and last countermark used on the coinage circulating in Sicily under Heraclius does not support a western origin for this type because, as Grierson has argued, the evidence suggests that this particular countermark was stamped on these coins at Constantinople before they were then exported to Sicily (*DOC* 2/1:54, 237–238).

Donald (1986) favored identifying the Neapolis in question as modern Limassol in Cyprus on the basis of three examples known to him of the NЄA group of coins discovered on Cyprus, two in a then unpublished hoard.[9] However, one might have expected any *folles* struck on Cyprus in *c*. 636 to have continued with the same basic mintmark as used by the temporary mint there from 626 to 629 referring to Cyprus itself rather than to any particular city upon the island. Furthermore, this city seems to have been known by two different names by the early seventh century, both Neapolis and Nemesos, and it is not at all clear that mint officials would have preferred to use the name Neapolis rather than Nemesos.[10]

Alternatively, Foss (2008:15) favors identifying the Neapolis in question as modern Nablus on the West Bank because of the two examples of the A/NЄA type discovered with the countermarks unique to coins circulating in or about *Palaestina Prima* in *c*. 636. The problem with this argument, however, is that one cannot be entirely sure that these countermarks were imposed locally rather than stamped on the coins elsewhere before they were then exported to *Palaestina*

9 Metcalf 2009:164 cited to two specimens discovered in what he referred to as the Athienou hoard, deposited after 643/4, one bearing two countermarks. This is the hoard discovered during archaeological work at Maroni-Petrera in 1992/1993 as described in Destrooper-Georgiades 1996:318, No. 157, now deposited in the Cyprus Museum.

10 Pappacostas 2015:129 suggested that ecclesiastical sources may have preferred the name Neapolis, while Nemesos was preferred in the secular sphere.

Prima, much as Grierson has argued in the case of the final Sicilian countermark under Heraclius. Yet even if one accepts this as the probability, the fact that one of this group of coins had also been countermarked with this final Sicilian countermark in Constantinople proves that this group was circulating over a wide area stretching from Constantinople to *Palaestina Prima* within a relatively short period. The discovery of an A/NЄA type at Pessinus in Galatia during an archaeological investigation there reinforces this point, even if the deposition of this coin cannot be dated (Devreker 1988:321). All of this could suggest that the striking of these coins might be better situated somewhere in a wide area defined by Constantinople, Cyprus and *Palaestina Prima* rather than at either of the latter locations. Indeed, the fact that the engraver of the NЄA group of coins imitated a Class 5 *follis* from Constantinople with Heraclian monogram above the M in the very year that the mint there began striking these encourages the belief that he was situated more centrally, and much nearer to Constantinople, than seems to have been considered possible heretofore.

If one insists that NЄA abbreviates a place name, then there is no good reason why the discussion concerning the identity of this place must be restricted to a discussion of the relative advantages of identifying it with either Neapolis in Cyprus or Neapolis in *Palaestina Prima*. After all, there were other towns of the same name within the wider region. There was a Neapolis in central Isauria (Hild and Hellenkemper 1990:365). There was also a Neapolis (later called Christoupolis) on the Via Sebaste just southeast of Antioch in Pisidia (Belke and Mersich 1990:347). Alternatively, the NЄA may have been intended as a reference to Isaura Nova (Ἰσαυρα Νέα), also in Isauria.[11] Nor should one forget Neapaphos on Cyprus, although it was more often known simply as Paphos.[12] Another possibility is the strategic town of Daras in Mesopotamia, renamed Anastasiopolis in 505, and renamed as Justiniana Nova (Νέα Ἰουστινιανή) under Justinian I.[13] Finally, one should not exclude the possibility that the NЄA may refer to a town that Heraclius had rebuilt following its devastation in the recent Persian war, so that it was briefly renamed a 'new' city, but that the scanty surviving sources for this period have simply failed to record this fact.

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11 There seems to be some difficulty in identifying the site of Isaura Nova. Belke and Restle 1984:180–181 identified it with the city more commonly known as Isauropolis. However, Talbert 2000:1016–1017 identified it with the city more commonly known as Leontopolis.

12 For the name Neapaphos, so called to distinguish it from Palaepaphos, see Pliny, *HN* 5:130.

13 The renaming of the city as Justiniana Nova is only known because its bishop Stephen was styled bishop of the metropolis of Justiniana Nova or Daras at the ecumenical council in Constantinople in 553. See Price 2009: vol. 2, p. 138.

It may prove helpful in determining which, if any, of the abovenamed towns is the most likely site of the mint described by the mintmark NЄA, if that is what it is, to consider why it was that Heraclius established temporary mints at various other locations earlier, and whether any of the same factors may also have been relevant in *c*. 635. One may start with the temporary mints established during the initial revolt of the Heraclii, father and son, against the then-emperor Phocas during *c*. 608–610. The revolt began in Carthage in Africa, but copper coinage in the name of the Heraclii as consuls was also struck in two other named locations, at a mint using the abbreviated name AΛЄ𐤉ANΔ during indiction years 13 and 14 (September 609–September 611) (*MIBEC*:205–206, Nos. 16–17), probably identifiable as Alexandria in Egypt, and at a mint in Cyprus using the mintmark KVΠPOV, or similar, during a year 3 (of consular rule?) and indiction year 14 (September 610–September 611) (*MIBEC*:206, Nos. 18–21). If, as is generally assumed, the purpose of such temporary mints was to pay troops, this suggests that the Heraclii sent a large force eastward from Carthage, which occupied Egypt first before then seizing Cyprus. As it happens, the literary evidence confirms that the Heraclii did send a large force to Egypt under the future emperor Heraclius' cousin Niketas, while Heraclius himself conducted a separate naval expedition aimed directly at Constantinople itself (Kaegi 2003:44–47). It seems probable, therefore, that the temporary mints at Alexandria and Cyprus testify to the slow advance of Niketas' forces in the southeastern Mediterranean while Heraclius took a swifter and more northerly sea route direct to Constantinople.

The next temporary mint to issue *folles* was at Jerusalem, and it dated all its coins to regnal year 4 (October 5, 613–October 4, 614).[14] The Persians sacked Jerusalem in May 614 after a brief siege (Kaegi 2003:78–80), so the coins cannot have been struck any later than this. The fact that the Persians were able to do this without engaging in any significant battle first argues strongly against identifying Jerusalem as the center of a powerful concentration of Byzantine forces at this time. Nevertheless, a mint there produced *folles* just before or during this siege, and there is good evidence now that *solidi* were also being struck there at about the same time.[15] Clearly, there was some sort of perceived need for more coinage, but perhaps one ought to think more in terms of local hoarding, inflation and demonetization in the face of an inevitable Persian attack rather than a need to pay a large number of troops in the area. The fact that the portrait on the *folles* resembles that of Phocas rather than of Heraclius increases the suspicion that the striking of these coins may have been authorized by a local civil or ecclesiastical authority rather than a more senior imperial or military authority.

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14 For a catalogue of the (then) known *folles* of Jerusalem, see Mansfield 2010.

15 For a hoard of 264 *solidi* from a single pair of dies, apparently produced at Jerusalem itself, see Bijovsky 2010. Earlier attempts to attribute some Heraclian *solidi* with the mark IΠ to Jerusalem are unpersuasive. See Woods 2016.

The temporary mint at Seleucia Isauriae (Seleucia ad Calycadnum) struck coins dated to regnal years 6–8 (October 5, 615–October 4, 618) using the mintmark SЄLISϒ, while the neighboring mint at Isaura struck coins dated to regnal year 8 alone (October 5, 617–October 4, 618) using the mintmark ISAVR. These dates, combined with the fact that an obverse die at Seleucia became the principal obverse die at Isaura, suggest that the mint at Isaura took over the production of coinage from that at Seleucia for some reason, perhaps because the Persians had captured that city. The general assumption has been that these mints served the needs of a large garrison stationed in this region (Hendy 1985:416; Trombley 2015), but the literary sources do not preserve any evidence of military forces operating out of this area. In particular, Trombley (2015) has argued that this garrison may have consisted of the Byzantine forces, which had retreated from the greater Syrian region in the face of the continued Persian onslaught, and that Heraclius may have temporarily concentrated his forces there in the hope of being able to mount a counterattack into Syria.

Finally, the temporary mint on Cyprus struck coins dated to regnal years 17–19 (October 5, 626–October 4, 629). The Persian threat had peaked in the joint Avar-Persian siege of Constantinople itself during the period June–August 626 (Kaegi 2003:133–138). At the same time, Heraclius himself was leading a large force in northeastern Anatolia. He campaigned deep into Armenia in 625, rested during 626, and campaigned deep into Armenia again and even into Persia itself in 627 and 628 in order to win his final victory. In these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that there would have been a particularly strong concentration of forces on Cyprus. The bulk of the available forces would have been assigned either to accompany Heraclius on campaign or to defend the capital itself. It is not plausible, therefore, that the main reason for the opening of the temporary mint on Cyprus was to pay for a large concentration of troops there. Nevertheless, this view has often been advanced (Hendy 1985:416; Foss 2008:17; Metcalf 2009:163; Zavagno 2011:456), even though it has no support whatsoever from the literary sources. Alternatively, it has been suggested that these coins may have been struck in order to make some form of payment to the large Persian forces stationed in Syria during this period (Pottier, Schulze and Schulze 2008:119). However, a more plausible explanation is that Cyprus may simply have been experiencing a growing shortage of copper coinage, the cumulative effect of the closure of the mint at Antioch in 610 and the growing communication difficulties with Constantinople peaking at the siege of that city in 626. This difficulty would have been exacerbated by the massive influx of refugees into Cyprus also. In such circumstances, it would have been entirely reasonable for permission to have been granted to open a new mint on Cyprus itself, to be closed when the war was over and communication with Constantinople was no longer threatened, as indeed happened. The fact that Cyprus was a copper producing region, and thus had the necessary raw material already at hand, probably encouraged this decision.

As even this brief survey indicates, there is no single, simple explanation as to why Heraclius, or his officials, allowed the development of temporary mints when and where they did. The military explanation, that is, the claim that temporary mints were primarily established in order to pay large concentrations of troops seems to work well in the case of the mints opened during the revolt of the Heraclii in *c*. 609–610, and may well explain the temporary mints in Seleucia Isauriae and Isaura in *c*. 615–618, but does not seem at all relevant to the situation at Jerusalem in 614 or on Cyprus in 626. This highlights the futility of trying to assess the location of the greatest concentrations of Byzantine forces during the period from 634 to 636 and then trying to find some toponym beginning Nea- in the general vicinity of these concentrations in an attempt to discover the origin of the NЄA group of coins. Of course, there was undoubtedly an increased concentration of Byzantine forces within the greater Syrian region in general from 634 to 636. However, the details of the Arab conquest of this region are disputable at best, to the extent of doubt over the date and location even of the decisive final battle in this campaign, the so-called Battle of Yarmūk traditionally dated to 636 (Woods 2007). Furthermore, no source mentions a major concentration of Byzantine forces at or near Neapolis in *Palaestina Prima* in particular. Nor does any source note that Neapolis on Cyprus was an important staging ground for Byzantine troops on the way to Palestine. Hence any attempt to locate the origin of the NЄA group of coins in either location is dubious at best.

In conclusion, the debate concerning the origin of the NЄA group of coins needs to proceed beyond the simple choice between Neapolis in Cyprus and Neapolis in *Palaestina Prima* characteristic of much of the discussion so far. There is a strong possibility that neither is correct. Indeed, the legend NЄA may not abbreviate a geographical name at all. As just outlined, there are other logical possibilities, and these need to be borne in mind in any future discussions of this topic. Finally, one should note that it is disappointing that so many specimens of this group have come onto the market over recent years with no indication as to their origin, since a detailed pattern of their provenances may be the best hope of progress in this matter in the long term. However, even negative results, as in the failure to discover any specimens of this group of coins in the many excavations in Israel (Bijovsky 2012:383), can assist in the rejection of what are often little better than guesses in this matter.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJC Y. Meshorer. *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. Dix Hills, NY 1982
AJN *American Journal of Numismatics*
BMC e.g., *BMC Arab*.: G.F. Hill. *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia*. London 1922
BMCO e.g., *BMCO* 1: S. Lane-Poole. *The Coins of the Eastern Khaleefehs in the British Museum. Catalogue of the Oriental Coins in the British Museum* 1. London 1875
CH *Coin Hoards*
CHL Y. Meshorer, G. Bijovsky and W. Fischer-Bossert. *Coins of the Holy Land: The Abraham and Marian Sofaer Collection at the American Numismatic Society and the Israel Museum*. Ed. by D. Hendin and A. Meadows. New York 2013
CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CNP e.g., L. Kadman. *The Coins of Akko Ptolemais* (Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium IV). Jerusalem 1961
CRE e.g., H. Mattingly. *The Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum I. Augustus to Vitellius*. London 1923
DOC e.g., P. Grierson. *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* 3. *Leo III to Nicephorus III 717–1081*. Washington, D.C. 1973
IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGCH M. Thompson, O. Mørkholm and C.M. Kraay. *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*. New York 1973
INJ *Israel Numismatic Journal*
INR *Israel Numismatic Research*
LA *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Liber Annuus*
LRBC e.g., P.V. Hill and J.P.C. Kent. Part 1: The Bronze Coinage of the House of Constantine, A.D. 324–46. In *Late Roman Bronze Coinage (A.D. 324–498)*. London 1965. Pp. 4–40
MIB e.g., W. Hahn. *Von Anastasius I. bis Justinianus I (491–565)*. Moneta Imperii Byzantini 1. Österreische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkscriften 109. Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 1. Vienna 1973
MIBE W. Hahn. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I–Justinian I, 491–565)* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 6). Vienna 2000
MIBEC W. Hahn and M. Metlich. *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire Continued (Justin II—Revolt of the Heraclii, 565–610)*. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte der Universität Wien 13). Vienna 2009
MN *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*
NC *Numismatic Chronicle*
NCirc. *Numismatic Circular*
NNM *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*
RIC e.g., C.H.V. Sutherland. *The Roman Imperial Coinage* I. *From 31 BC to AD 69*. London 1984
RN *Revue Numismatique*
RPC e.g., A. Burnett, M. Amandry and I. Carradice. *From Vespasian to Domitian (AD 69–96). Roman Provincial Coinage* 2. London 1999
RRC M.H. Crawford. *Roman Republican Coinage*. Cambridge 1974
SC e.g., A. Houghton and C. Lorber. *Seleucid Coins. A Comprehensive Catalogue. Part I. Seleucus I through Antiochus III*. New York, Lancaster, Penn.-London 2002
SICA e.g., S. Album and T. Goodwin. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean* 1*: The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period*. Oxford 2002
SNAT e.g., L. Ilisch. *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen–Palästina IVa Bilād aš-Šām* I. Tübingen 1993
SNG *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* (with suffix as necessary, e.g. *SNG Cop.*)
SNR *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*
TINC *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress*
TJC Y. Meshorer. *A Treasury of Jewish Coins from the Persian Period to Bar Kochba*. Jerusalem-Nyack 2001
ZfN *Zeitschrift für Numismatik*